

# Tree Country

January/February 2023



the employee  
newsletter of the  
**South Carolina  
Forestry Commission**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



FY 2023-24 Budget Request  
pages 3-4



Success Story: Shared Stewardship Agreement  
page 14



Basic Fire School  
pages 15-16

*from the desk of*  
**STATE FORESTER**  
**Scott Phillips**



When I started my role as State Forester, I laid out five priorities aimed at strengthening the Commission and the services we provide the people of South Carolina.

To quickly recap, these priorities are: (1) providing for the safety of employees and the public, (2) providing outstanding service to South Carolina's forestry community, (3) making the Forestry Commission a desirable place to work, (4) maintaining South Carolina's forestry-friendly environment, and (5) strengthening communications to better tell our story. For our newer employees or those who haven't looked at these priorities recently, please take a moment to review the [original column](#) from January 2018 in the Tree Country archives.

These five priorities still guide the agency's direction today and, in many ways, were integrated into the agency's strategic plan, vision and values as we crafted those documents in 2020. Working as a team, we have made a lot of progress in each of these areas, and I am especially proud of the progress we have made in making the agency a more desirable place to work. But we still have much to do.

Our budget request this year sets the stage for continued progress. The request, broken down into five priorities, addresses the agency's most critical needs while also seeking to build programs that will increase our ability to protect the citizens of South Carolina and provide for the safety of our employees.

Primarily we are seeking funding for salaries; new positions to bolster safety, training and recruiting efforts; funding to offset increased operating and equipment costs due to inflation; and funding for contract single engine air tankers (SEATs) to augment our initial attack capacity during peak wildfire periods in the increasingly complex environment where we fight wildfires. A more detailed summary of the budget request is on pages 3 and 4.

All of the items in the budget request are important, but the most critical component of our request is the salary funding for law enforcement officers, frontline wildland firefighters, and



State Forester Scott Phillips speaks at the Shared Stewardship Agreement ceremony (see page 14).

foresters. Recruiting forestry workers is a major issue in the southern region and nationally. Competition for workers is at an all-time high, and due to workforce challenges, competitors for forestry workers have increased their compensation packages, making agency salaries non-competitive. Forestry Commission Class I law enforcement officers were not included in the salary increases the General Assembly provided in the FY2023 budget, effectively making the agency's Fire Management Officers (FMO) the lowest paid Class I officers in state government. This oversight severely limits our recruitment efforts, really hurts morale, and increases the likelihood of turnover in these critical positions.

In response, the agency initiated a compensation study of frontline firefighter, law enforcement and forester positions last year. The study was initiated to address recruiting challenges for these positions, address the disparities between SCFC law enforcement officer salaries and those at other state agencies, and continue the agency's long-term efforts to make the Forestry Commission a more desirable place to work. The Department of Administration's Division of State Human Resources (DSHR) conducted this study and released the final report in mid-January.

In the study DSHR recommends significant pay increases for FMOs, Investigators, and employees in the forester career path. For FMOs and Investigators DSHR recommends increases to the minimum salary ranging

from 21-29%. For personnel that fill positions in the agency's career path for foresters the recommended increase is about 13%. These recommendations are driven by DSHR's review of comparable positions in adjacent states and put the agency in a good position as we seek funding to support these increases in our budget request.

DSHR declined to make a recommendation on the salaries for agency frontline firefighters (i.e. Forest Technician I and Warden positions). However, the agency feels that an increase in these salaries is critically important given the significant recruiting challenges we face when filling these jobs and included a request to increase these salaries by about 20% in our budget request. Not having a recommendation from DSHR makes this portion of our budget request a heavier lift, but the agency feels it is imperative that we fight for these employees.

[A copy of the full report can be found here.](#) It is important to note that while the agency was heavily engaged with DSHR during the analysis, the report was written with minimal input from the Commission. While the analysis is sound and the recommendations solid, the narrative contains some errors, inaccuracies, and mischaracterizations. So, please take the wording in the report with a grain of salt.

Also, it is important to remember that the DSHR study is just a recommendation. Action is required by the General Assembly to implement these recommendations in the FY2024 budget. Having DSHR's support greatly improves the agency's chance of success, but it does not guarantee it.

Preliminary results from the DSHR study were used to inform the agency's #1 priority in the budget request that is currently being considered by the General Assembly. The agency request includes \$1.235 million for FMO, investigator, and forester salaries and \$1.365 million for frontline firefighter salaries. If fully funded the request will provide commensurate increases for all employees in these positions.

As you read this column, the Governor's Executive Budget has already been released, and the agency has already presented our request to the House Ways and Means Subcommittee. Governor McMaster, once again, put the Forestry Commission in a great position to start the legislative session. The Governor's Executive Budget proposes full funding for our recruitment and retention request, which is our #1 priority. Full funding is also proposed for the agency's #2, #3 and #5 priorities. However, the operating funds requested in priority #2 were included as non-recurring, instead of the recurring requested, and the non-recurring requested for the SEATs was not included in the proposal. That said, rarely if ever do agencies get everything they request, so this is a very good starting position with our most critical needs being included.

The budget presentation to the House Ways and Means subcommittee went very well. Chairman Stavrinakis, Rep. Weeks and Rep. Hyde were very interested in our needs, and I am optimistic that they will do their best to support our most critical needs as the House considers the budget. That said, the budget process still has a long way to go, and the final outcome will not be known until late spring or early summer.

I'm sure many of you noted that the DSHR study and salary component of this year's budget request focuses on just a portion of the agency's employees. Though not addressed in this study/request the agency continues to evaluate the compensation for all employees to ensure we are competitive as part of our long-term goal to strengthen the SCFC for the future. As I tell my staff frequently, this is a marathon, not a sprint, and we have miles to go before our race is completed.

Best regards,

# SCFC BUDGET REQUEST

## FY2023-24, PRIORITIZED SUMMARY

### Priority 1: Recruitment and retention

Competition for workers, particularly in forestry, is at an all-time high. Entry-level salaries for wildland firefighters, law enforcement officers and foresters are not competitive with the increases for comparable positions within private industry or state and federal government.

These non-competitive wages are hampering recruitment efforts, leading to long times to fill positions and low numbers of qualified applicant for forestry positions. Compensation inequities between SCFC Class I law enforcement officers and other state law enforcement officers must be addressed.

- The number of qualified candidates for open forestry positions in the agency has fallen nearly 60% from 9.5 applicants/posting in FY2021 to 3.92 applicants/posting in FY2022.
- To fill current and expected vacancies, the agency will need to hire at least 15 forester positions in FY2023.
- The entry-level salary for SCFC Class I officers is 23% below the minimum starting salary recommended by DSHR for Class I officers.
- Currently ~9% of the agency's frontline firefighter positions are vacant, with the average position being vacant nearly 10 months.

Additionally, the high number of employees eligible to retire within the next five years (>40%) exacerbates the situation; 24% of SCFC's workforce can retire today.

Fully funding this request will provide salary increases for critical positions. It will also shift four FTEs to more stable state funding and provide three new FTEs to bolster recruitment, safety and training efforts.



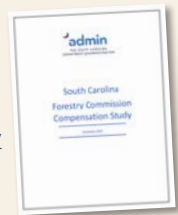
### Requested amount:

- General recurring:  
\$3,415,000

### FTEs:

- +7 (state)
- -3 (federal)
- -1 (other)
- 3 (total)**

Supporting this budget request item is a recent [Division of State Human Resources salary study](#) that recommends increasing the salary ranges of SCFC Fire Management Officers, Investigators and Foresters.



According to DSHR's analysis, the current minimum salaries for the aforementioned positions are substantially lower than those of their counterparts in Georgia, North Carolina, the US Forest Service and the private sector, making the need to update these career paths critically important for agency succession planning.

DSHR believes the proposed increases will assist SCFC in the recruitment and retention of these important positions and prepare the agency for the looming impacts of retirements.



# SCFC BUDGET REQUEST

## FY2023-24, PRIORITIZED SUMMARY, continued

### Priority 2: Increasing costs for emergency response operations

Inflation has dramatically increased the cost of fuel, supplies, maintenance and repairs for agency firefighting equipment. The Commission operates over \$75 million of wildland firefighting equipment, which requires funds to maintain and provide fuel for. To ensure that resources can respond to wildfires, additional operating funds are critically needed to sustain the agency's fleet for the continued protection of forests, homes and lives of SC citizens.

#### Requested amount:

- General recurring: \$655,000
- Federal authority: \$1,400,000



### Priority 3: Increasing costs for firefighting equipment

Inflation and supply chain issues have increased the cost of firefighting equipment substantially. The cost of a firefighting unit, for example, has increased more than 25% over the past year.

Looking ahead, the cost of a firefighting unit is expected to go up an additional 5% in FY2024. Because of those looming increases, our existing funding of \$2 million state recurring and \$2.2 million from Act 273 is simply not sufficient to achieve our previously attained goal of 160 enclosed-cab bulldozers by 2025.

#### Requested amount:

- General non-recurring: \$1,600,000



### Priority 4: Contract single-engine air tankers (SEATs)

The addition of contract Single-Engine Air Tankers (SEATS) during the peak of wildfire activity would provide aerial firefighting capacity and result in a significant improvement in the effectiveness of wildfire suppression, the protection of homes and improved properties, and increased safety for firefighters, first responders and the public. Moreover, wildfire complexity has increased substantially as the state's population continues to grow and citizens build houses in our forests, expanding the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

#### Requested amount:

- General non-recurring: \$3,500,000



### Priority 5: Law enforcement vehicle

This request is a companion to the recruitment and retention budget request. Should the law enforcement investigator position be funded, one-time funding will be needed to supply the tools necessary to do the job, including purchasing a vehicle for this officer.

#### Requested amount:

- General non-recurring: \$62,700





## LEAD Time

### Bias for Action

Leaders in the wildland fire service are not only empowered but also duty-bound to act on a situation that is within their power to affect, even without direction from above.

This empowerment is not intended to encourage freelancing. In a high-risk environment, freelancing is a dangerous and unpredictable element, causing more harm than good. Ultimately, leaders are always accountable for their actions.

- A bias for action acknowledges wildfire as an environment where events do not always go according to plan.
- At times during an incident, one person may be the only individual to see what needs to be done and to make it happen.
- Time may not permit gathering all of the information that one might like to have; if you wait until you have all the facts to be 100% sure of your decision, it will almost always be too late.

In these time-critical situations, fire leaders use judgment, act within the intent of their leaders, work in unison with others, develop and communicate a plan, then inform superiors of actions as soon as safely possible.

On a chaotic and rapidly developing wildfire, one person taking the initiative can make all the difference in taking advantage of an opportunity. Being hesitant, risk-averse, or indecisive can expose firefighters to greater long-term risks and translate into a waste of time, opportunity, energy, and money.

### Discussion Points

- Discuss the difference between freelancing and a bias for action.
- Describe and discuss instances of taking appropriate action and of indecisiveness or non-action.
- What are some ways we train for situations requiring a bias for action?

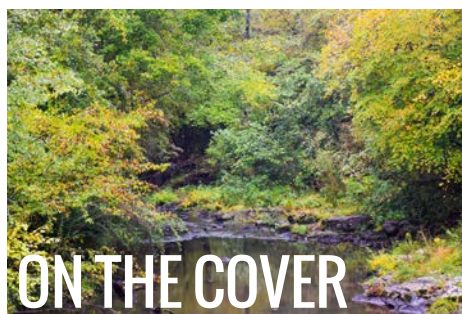
### REFERENCES:

[Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program](#)

[Leading In the Wildland Fire Service, PMS 494-2](#)

Provided by Training & Safety Manager Stephen Patterson

This safety message comes from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCWG) Risk Management Committee's Six Minutes for Safety Program. <https://www.nwcwg.gov/committee/6mfs>



**ON THE COVER**

The cover photo features a creek at the Berry Forestry Center.

### JUST FOR FUN...



See if you can find the hidden dozer located somewhere in this issue of Tree Country. (It will be smaller than the one to the left and NO, it isn't the one in the header of the Safety Message.)



# Human Resources

## Employee News

Please welcome the following new employees who started with the agency in December and January:



Michael Lane

**Michael Lane** is a new Forestry Technician I for the Bamberg/Colleton Sector. He started Dec. 2 and lives in Colleton County. Michael attended Walterboro High School and has 33 years in the SC National Guard and one year with Davis Mail Services.

**Pat Mitchum** is a new Forestry Technician I for the Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector. He started Dec. 2 and lives in Cross. Pat previously worked at Martin Marietta Materials and Holcim Cement Company. In his spare time he enjoys hunting and fishing.



Pat Mitchum

**Victor Frontroth** is the new GIS Analyst at the headquarters. He started Dec. 19 and lives in Columbia. Victor attended the University of South Carolina in Columbia and previously worked in GIS with South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs. In his spare time Victor enjoys fishing, running and playing golf.



Victor Frontroth

**Taylor Cabe** is the new Lexington/Richland Project Forester. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Chapin. Taylor attended Clemson University and has experience farming, landscaping and boating. Taylor was an intern at Harbison State Forest.



Taylor Cabe

**Will Atkinson** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Dillon/Florence Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Mullins. Will graduated from Pee Dee Academy and attended the Citadel, Horry-Georgetown Tech, Francis Marion University and Midlands Technical College. Will is a farmer and entrepreneur who enjoys playing the guitar.



Will Atkinson

**Conner Estes** is the new Kershaw/Lancaster/Lee Project Forester. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Blythewood. Conner attended Clemson and has experience as an electrician's apprentice, was an arborist at the SC Botanical Garden and served as a university research aide. He also interned at Harbison State Forest. In his spare time Conner enjoys hiking, camping and rock climbing.



Conner Estes

**Human Resources**  
—Krista Emory

(continued next page)

# Human Resources

## Employee News (continued)



Kyle Minasian

**Kyle Minasian** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Summerville. Kyle attended Castle high School in Newburgh, IN and Vincennes University. He has eight years with the U.S. Army Reserve, spending 13 months in Iraq and over 14 years with the City of Charleston Fire Department. In his spare time he enjoys long distance motorcycle riding.



Peyton McDougal

**Peyton McDougal** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Calhoun/Orangeburg Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Orangeburg. Peyton attended Orangeburg Prep and has experience working on a farm.



Tripp Coker

**Tripp Coker** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Clarendon/Sumter Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Clarendon County. Tripp attended Manning High School and is the son of retired Forestry Technician I Bill Coker. He has experience farming and as a millwright. In his spare time he enjoys hunting and fishing.



Will Henderson

**Will Henderson** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Darlington/Marlboro Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Hartsville. Will attended Lee Academy, is self-employed at Henderson Supply Co. Inc. and also worked for the Hartsville Fire Department. He enjoys hunting and spending time with his wife Brittany and their children.



William T. Yonce

**William T. Yonce** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Saluda. He attended Saluda High School and Lander University. William has experience in customer service for Velux, sales at Cromley's Inc. and is a volunteer firefighter for Mayson Fire Department. He enjoys farming and lawn care and has an interest in cows, cars and trucks.



Matthew Long

**Matthew Long** is a new Forestry Technician I in the Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector. He started Jan. 17 and lives in Lexington County. He attended Batesburg-Leesville High School and is self-employed.

## Welcome!

# Human Resources

## Employee News

### Employee Actions

The following employees have accepted the position of **Assistant Unit Forester**:

Piedmont BMP Forester **Jon Barker** - **Piedmont East Unit** - effective Dec. 17, 2022

Anderson/Greenville/Oconee/Pickens Project Forester **Trey Cox** - **Piedmont West Unit** - effective Dec. 17, 2022

Berkeley/Charleston/Dorchester Project Forester **Austin Phillips** - **Santee Unit** - effective Jan. 2, 2023

Chesterfield/Darlington/Marlboro Project Forester **Brandon Smith** - **Lynches River Unit** - effective Jan. 2, 2023

Pee Dee Stewardship Forester **Tonya Smith** - **Black River Unit** - effective Jan. 2, 2023

Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Project Forester **Drew Pressley** - **Edisto Unit** - effective Jan. 17, 2023

### Farewells

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Sarah Carter** separated from the agency Dec. 1.

Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector Forestry Technician I **Shawn Porter** separated Dec. 4.

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Brianna Shaw** separated from the agency Dec. 16.

Coastal Sr. Administrative Assistant **Brenda Berry** separated from the agency Dec. 29.

Clarendon/Sumter Project Forester **Davis Martin** separated Jan. 6.

Pee Dee Dispatcher **Channan Hicks** separated from the agency Jan. 13.

Coastal Dispatcher **Bernie Bazzle** separated from the agency Jan. 22 after 41 years. Bernie previously retired in 2017.

Allendale/Hampton/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician I **Don Mixon** retired Dec. 31 with 29 years of service.

Beaufort/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician I **Lou Sanders** retired Jan. 6 with 37 years of service.

Congratulations to all retirees!



### Retiree News

Retired Darlington County warden **Chip Lowman** passed away Dec. 5.

Retired Bamberg County Ranger Joseph Milton "**Mirt**" **Steedly** passed away Dec. 29.

Please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.

## Mileage Rate Increases to 65.5 Cents

**IMPORTANT!!!**

The General Appropriations Act provides for mileage reimbursements at the standard business mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. Beginning on January 1, 2023, the Internal Revenue Service rate will be 65.5 cents per mile (Announcement 2022-234). **Reimbursement for trips taken on or after January 1, 2023, will be at the rate of 65.5 cents per mile.**

As a reminder, the same proviso in the General Appropriations Act also directs a reimbursement rate of 4 cents per mile less than the standard business mileage rate when an employee chooses to use his or her personal vehicle when a motor pool vehicle is reasonably available. This rate will change to 61.5 cents per mile for reimbursement for trips taken on or after January 1, 2023.

**Administration**

– Cathy Nordeen

**IMPORTANT!!!**

# THE Benefits Beat



South Carolina



## State Optional Retirement Program (ORP) Annual Open Enrollment Period - January 1-March 1, 2023

The annual open enrollment period for participants of the [State Optional Retirement Program](#) (State ORP) is January 1 to March 1 of each year. During this period, State ORP participants may change their State ORP service provider or, if eligible, may irrevocably elect to participate in the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS). State ORP participants are eligible to change from the State ORP to SCRS during the 2023 open enrollment period if at any point during the open enrollment period it has been at least one year, but not more than five years, since their initial enrollment in the State ORP.

The four ORP vendors are: Corebridge Financial (Formerly Known as AIG Retirement Services) (State ORP); Empower Retirement (State ORP); TIAA (State ORP); and Voya Financial (State ORP).

PEBA mailed State ORP participants information about the open enrollment period. The Human Resources Office also mailed information to ORP employees. More information on annual open enrollment may be found at [peba.sc.gov/sorp-oe](https://peba.sc.gov/sorp-oe). Employees can login into Member Access on PEBA website to make changes or contact Chetna Patel, Benefits Administrator, (803) 896-8874 or by email at [cpatel@scfc.gov](mailto:cpatel@scfc.gov).

## PEBA Benefits

Start 2023 with a fresh start and get to know your PEBA benefits by logging in to MyBenefits. MyBenefits is a fast and convenient way for employees to get to know what coverage they have with PEBA. Employees receive insurance cards for health, prescription, dental and vision benefits. They also can access digital identification cards from the BlueCross, Express Scripts and EyeMed apps. Only the subscriber's name will be on the cards, but all covered family members can use them.

Need a new or additional insurance card? Any one of them can be replaced using the contacts below and using your Benefits Identification Number (BIN). Employees who do not know their BIN can visit [MyBenefits.sc.gov](https://MyBenefits.sc.gov) and select "Get My BIN" in the lower right corner. [www.mybenefits.com](https://www.mybenefits.com)

### State Health Plan

For help accessing or replacing your card, call BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina at 800.868.2520 or log in to My Health Toolkit® [www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com](https://www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com)

### Dental Plus

For help accessing or replacing your card, call BlueCross at (888) 214-6230 or log in to My Health Toolkit. [www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com](https://www.StateSC.SouthCarolinaBlues.com). If you need a Basic Dental card, please contact Chetna Patel, Benefits Administrator, (803) 896-8874 or by email at [cpatel@scfc.gov](mailto:cpatel@scfc.gov).

### Vision Care

For help accessing or replacing your card, call EyeMed at (877) 735-9314 or visit [www.Eyemed.com](https://www.Eyemed.com)

### Prescription Drugs

For help accessing or replacing your cards, call Express Scripts at (855) 612-3128 or visit [www.Express-Scripts.com](https://www.Express-Scripts.com)

## Human Resources

—Chetna Patel



**Chetna Patel**

Benefits Administrator

Office: (803) 896-8874

Fax: (803) 896-8866

[cpatel@scfc.gov](mailto:cpatel@scfc.gov)

## Take Charge of Your Health

### Play an active role in your health and improve your quality of care.

When you play an active role in your health, you can improve the quality of care you and your family receive. To take charge of your health:

- Keep track of important health information. This includes checking your health insurance coverage in MyBenefits to ensure it's what you elected during open enrollment.
- Download mobile apps, such as My Health Toolkit®, Express Scripts® and EyeMed®, to your cell phone.
- Make sure you have your health insurance ID cards handy. If you've downloaded the mobile apps, you will have copies of your ID cards on your phone.
- Schedule your annual doctor appointments for the year. These include a well visit, dentist appointments and an eye exam.

You'll also want to take advantage of a preventive health screening this year. A preventive screening can give you insight about your health risks so you can take steps to improve your health. Be sure to schedule your preventive screening, which is available at no cost to you, before your adult well visit. Doing this will minimize cost to the Plan at your adult well visit.

(continued)

## BENEFITS continued

This benefit, worth more than \$300, is available to employees, retirees, COBRA subscribers and their covered spouses, and former spouses if their primary coverage is the Standard Plan or the Savings Plan. Screenings include blood work, a health risk appraisal, height and weight measurements, blood pressure check, and lipid panels. A screening can help identify potential health problems, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. You can share the screening results with your doctor to get a better understanding of your health. Sharing your results might also lessen the expense of lab tests from your provider.

There are several ways you can take advantage of this benefit:

1. Attend a worksite screening. Talk to your benefits administrator to see if a screening is scheduled at your worksite.
2. Attend a regional screening. Find a schedule of regional screenings at [www.PEBAPerks.com](http://www.PEBAPerks.com).
3. Visit a participating screening provider. A list of providers is available at [www.PEBAPerks.com](http://www.PEBAPerks.com).

Finally, if you are looking to live healthier and lose weight in the process, you can sign up for the Wondr® program. It is a skills-based digital weight loss program that can help you feel better and live stronger. Wondr's renowned doctors and scientists teach practical, science-based skills that can improve long-term health. Through the app, online community, certified coaches, and weekly video series, you will get a fresh and fun perspective on better health.

State Health Plan members, including spouses and dependent children ages 18 and older, are eligible to apply for Wondr. Medicare-primary members are also eligible to apply. The program is available at no cost to you.

To apply for the program or join the waitlist for the upcoming class, visit [www.WondrHealth.com/PEBA](http://www.WondrHealth.com/PEBA).

State Health Plan members can get health information through text messages. To sign up, call 844.284.5417 from your cell phone or text "Perks" to 735-29. (The above article came from PEBA Health Hub.)

If you have questions or need assistance with any of this month's newsletter topics, please contact me, Chetna Patel-Kansupada, at (803) 896-8874 or via email [cpatel@scfc.gov](mailto:cpatel@scfc.gov).



## NEWS

### Truesdale Welcomes First Child

Congratulations to Berkeley/Upper Charleston Sector FMO **Wade Truesdale** and wife Ashley on the birth of their first child, daughter Rylee Anne. She was born Dec. 6 weighing 9 lbs., 10 oz. and was 21.5 inches long. All are doing well.



### Harrington Welcomes First Child...A Daughter

Congratulations to Beaufort/Jasper Sector FMO **Scotty Harrington** and wife Stephanie on the birth of their first child, daughter Shelby Elizabeth. She was born December 31, 2022, at 8:54 a.m. weighing 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 20 inches long. Baby, mother and father are doing well.



# Employee Service Awards



## SERVICE AWARDS FOR JANUARY

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
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No service awards for January

## SERVICE AWARDS FOR FEBRUARY

Employee's Name	Position	Location	State Service
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Scotty Harrington	FMO	Edisto Unit	10 years
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Equipment Coordinator Doug Mills (right) presented Piedmont Mechanic Kevin Garner with his 20-year service certificate Dec. 7 (for July 2022).



Now-retired Beaufort/Jasper Sector Forestry Technician I Lou Sanders stopped by the Walterboro office on his last day to tell everyone goodbye. Pictured left to right: Edisto Unit Forester Kip Terry, Sanders, Coastal Regional Forester Calvin Bailey and Coastal Communications Manager Mike Thomas.

## SCFC/NC Forest Service Meet and Greet



Greenville/Pickens Sector FMO Ray Cassell, Piedmont West Assistant Unit Forester Trey Cox and Piedmont Forestry Center Manager Chris McCorkle planned and held the annual SCFC/North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) Meet and Greet Jan. 18 at the Piedmont Forestry Center. Everyone enjoyed Trey's and Chris's BBQ chicken and pork. The West Unit has held this meeting annually (except for 2 Covid years) since 2015, alternating between the SCFC and the NCFS hosting. These meetings are an opportunity for everyone to meet face to face before they work on state line wildfires. Agencies represented were the SC Forestry Commission (Piedmont East and West Units, NCFS (Districts 1 and 9), SC Department of Natural Resources and the Greenville Watershed.

# CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

For complete information on SCFC job openings visit <http://www.jobs.sc.gov>, click on the **www.jobs.sc.gov** mouse, search by agency for "Forestry".

**Job Title:** **Forestry Technician I (3 positions)**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$25,079.00  
**Location:** Jasper County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** Continuous  
**Max:** \$26,334.00

**Job Title:** **FIA Forester I (temp grant)**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$39,843.00  
**Location:** Richland County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** Continuous  
**Max:** \$45,700.00

**Job Title:** **Forester I**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$39,843.00  
**Location:** Orangeburg County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/09/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$45,700.00

**Job Title:** **Forestry Technician I**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$25,079.00  
**Location:** Edgefield County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/09/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$26,334.00

**Job Title:** **Forestry Technician I**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$25,079.00  
**Location:** Hampton County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/10/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$26,334.00

**Job Title:** **Forester II**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$47,423.00  
**Location:** Sumter County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/10/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$55,614.00

**Job Title:** **Forester II**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$47,423.00  
**Location:** Colleton County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/10/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$55,614.00

**Job Title:** **Forester II**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$47,423.00  
**Location:** Hampton County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/10/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$55,614.00

**Job Title:** **Forester II**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$47,423.00  
**Location:** Pickens County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/10/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$55,614.00

**Job Title:** **Assistant Fire Chief**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$59,989.00  
**Location:** Richland County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/12/23 01:49 PM  
**Max:** \$74,613.00

**Job Title:** **Forester II**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$47,423.00  
**Location:** Chesterfield County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 02/12/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$55,614.00

**Job Title:** **Forestry Technician I**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$25,079.00  
**Location:** Allendale County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 03/01/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$26,334.00

**Job Title:** **Forestry Technician I**  
**Agency Hiring Range:** Min: \$25,079.00  
**Location:** Beaufort County, South Carolina

**Closing Date/Time:** 03/01/23 11:59 PM  
**Max:** \$26,334.00



## PRIVACY POINTERS



Personal



Bodily



Territorial



Information



Permission



Statement



Communications



Policy

## Watch Out for These Common Tax Season Scams

Tax season has started and so have the tax-time swindles ranging from high-tech identity theft to tried-and-true con jobs. Here are six of the most common this year, according to the Internal Revenue Service:

### 1. Phishing

Con artists use unsolicited emails and fake websites to lure potential victims into divulging personal information that will then be used to commit identity theft and fraud. Be leery of unexpected emails from the IRS promising refunds or threatening to collect. They're fake — the IRS doesn't initiate contact with taxpayers by email, text messages, or social media channels to request personal or financial information. If you receive a suspicious phishing email claiming to be from the IRS, report the email to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).

### 2. Verification requests

Don't be fooled by scammers asking you to "verify" your W-2 or personal information. Some may ask you to upload a picture of your forms. The only time that the IRS would request ID verification would be if they were concerned about a suspicious tax return with a real taxpayer's name or Social Security number. If that's the case, they would generally send a Letter 507IC (check the upper corner for the number) in the mail and ask you to verify your identity using the Identity Verification Service.

### 3. Phone scams

Scammers impersonating IRS agents may make aggressive or threatening calls demanding money or offering a refund. Sometimes they even alter their caller ID information to appear as if they're calling from an IRS office. But that's not how the IRS does business, according to officials. The first IRS contact with taxpayers is usually via mail.

### 4. Inflated refund claims

Beware of tax preparers who ask you to sign a blank check, promise big refunds before looking at your records, or charge fees based on a percentage of your refund. They use fliers and phony storefronts. These scammers may file a false return in your name and take your refund. The IRS offers tips for choosing a preparer.

### 5. Fake charities

After disasters, it's common for scammers to impersonate charities; some even contact victims, claiming to be with the IRS. These groups often have names similar to legitimate organizations. Don't give out personal financial information or Social Security numbers. And don't give or send cash. You can look up legitimate charities and tax-exempt organizations.

### 6. Identity theft

One of the most common identity theft scams involves filing tax returns using stolen Social Security numbers. Protect your personal data, check your credit report annually, and review your Social Security Administration earnings statement each year to make sure you haven't been targeted.

For more information, check out the IRS section on ID theft and a longer list of tax-time scams.

### Administration

— Dana Austin



**Dana Austin**

Privacy Officer

Office: (803) 896-8805

[daustin@scfc.gov](mailto:daustin@scfc.gov)

## SUCCESS STORIES

From left to right, SC State Parks Director Paul McCormack, USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Laurie Funderburk, Clemson Extension Natural Resources Program Director Derrick Phinney, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Ann English, State Forester Scott Phillips, US Fish & Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director Leo Miranda, SC Department of Natural Resources Director Robert Boyles, USDA Forest Service Southeast Regional Forester Ken Arney and The Adjutant General of the SC National Guard Maj. Gen. Van McCarty.

### Natural Resource Agencies Sign Shared Stewardship Agreement

Directors of nine federal and state agencies came together Dec. 9 to sign a Shared Stewardship agreement at a ceremony held on Harbison State Forest. Shared stewardship agreements between federal and state agencies establish a framework to improve collaboration, accomplish mutual goals, further common interests and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and natural resource concerns. This was the largest group of agency partners (nine) ever to convene to sign a shared stewardship memorandum of understanding within a state.

The agreement will use the best available science to manage and enhance private and public lands within the Palmetto State. South Carolina's forests will benefit from strengthened partnerships between these agencies.

"This memorandum of understanding reminds us of our shared responsibilities to care for South Carolina's lands across all boundaries," said Southern Regional Forester Ken Arney with the USDA Forest Service. "This shared stewardship agreement builds on a long history of collaboration between the USDA and the state of South Carolina in improving air and water quality and ensuring our forestlands are sustainable for future generations."

"The diversity of the signatories here today shows that conservation truly is a team sport here in South Carolina. We have a great group of partners engaged in conserving the forests of our state and the full suite of benefits they produce," said State Forester Scott Phillips. "Our forests provide clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and beautiful scenery. At the same time they provide sustainable raw materials that are a pillar of our state's economy, supporting more than 100,000 high paying jobs and generating an annual economic impact of \$23.2 billion."

Signatories included:

- Ken Arney, Southern Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service
- Scott Phillips, State Forester, SC Forestry Commission
- Robert Boyles, Director, SC Department of Natural Resources
- Paul McCormack, State Parks Director, SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism
- Ann English, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Laurie Funderburk, State Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency
- Leo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- George Askew, VP, Public Service & Agriculture
- Major General R. Van McCarty, The Adjutant General, SC National Guard



Directors of federal and state agencies sign the Shared Stewardship agreement.

# Basic Fire School Held at Camp Bob Cooper

Basic Fire School was held Jan. 23-27 at Camp Bob Cooper for 16 new firefighting employees, three mechanics and one temp pilot before fire season begins. The training includes fire suppression tactics, fighting bay fires and mountain fires, wildfire origin, cause and investigation, prescribed burning, safety and accident prevention, professionalism, communications, air operations, working with cooperators and the media. It also includes L-180 and S-130 and is mandatory for SCFC firefighters. The school was led by Protection Chief Darryl Jones and Training & Safety Manager Stephen Patterson. Classes were taught by experienced SCFC personnel from all over the state.

(more photos next page)



Basic Fire School students and instructors for the S-130 portion of school.



Protection Chief Darryl Jones explains how to get a red card and go out on a fire assignment.



Assistant Law Enforcement Chief Jonathan Calore demonstrates how to deploy a fire shelter.



Pee Dee Law Enforcement Investigator Winn McCaskill shows how to use each hand tool.



Piedmont Dispatch Manager Karly Cassada explains how the dispatch system works and why it is very important to check in with them.

# PHOTOS from Basic Fire School



Students pick a hand tool to use for the S-130 class Jan. 26.



The class members head out to fight fire with their hand tools.



Lexington/Richland Project Forester Taylor Cabe (left) and Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector Forestry Technician Matthew Long listen to the briefing.



Class members after constructing their first handline.



Clarendon/Sumter Sector Forestry Technician I Tripp Coker radios in that they have a spot fire.



Bamberg/Colleton Sector Forestry Technician I Michael Lane works on the break.



Squad 1 works to construct a firebreak on the left flank of the fire.



Squad 2 makes a break on the right flank.

# NDA State Youth Deer Hunt Held at Niederhof

Niederhof Forestry Center hosted the State Youth Deer Hunt Dec. 2-3 for seven children from the Take One, Make One program, Outdoor Dream Foundation and the SC National Guard. The hunt was sponsored by the National Deer Association (NDA), Southern Sportsman Alliance, Leopold, the Forestry Commission and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Take One, Make One program.

There was an orientation on the property, hunting program and hunt guidelines before the children were paired with a mentor. They sighted their guns in on the range and drew for stands. The hunters received a safety briefing before the afternoon hunt began.

During the hunt, three deer were harvested, and 39 deer were seen on the property. Fifteen-year-old Cooper Harrison harvested a nice 6-point buck and a 115-lb. doe while thirteen-year-old Gabriel Hughes harvested his first deer, a 77-lb. doe. Gabriel was so excited but nervous when three does came out of the woods. He said, "I was shaking; the whole tree stand was shaking, I was so nervous."

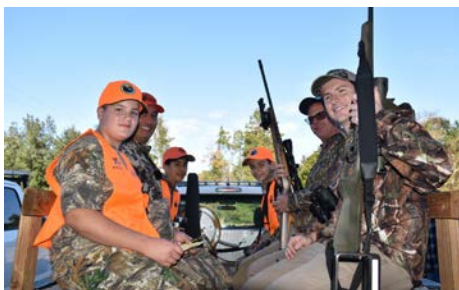
The NDA and Southern Sportsman Alliance provided meals, mentors and some gifts for the hunters. The Take One Make One program provided guns and mentors for those who didn't have one. The Forestry Commission provided the instruction, location and transportation to and from the stands. Everyone enjoyed the fun and fellowship in the beautiful outdoors.



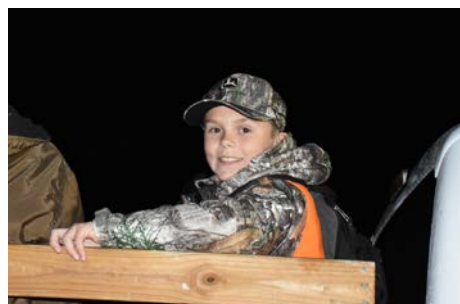
Four of the seven youth hunters enjoying the fellowship at the hunt.



The hunt attendees after the Saturday hunt.



The hunters are ready to go to their stands.



Eleven-year-old Gavin Sealy is eager to get to the stand.



Fifteen-year-old Cooper Harrison, with mother BeBe, harvested a buck and a doe on the hunt.



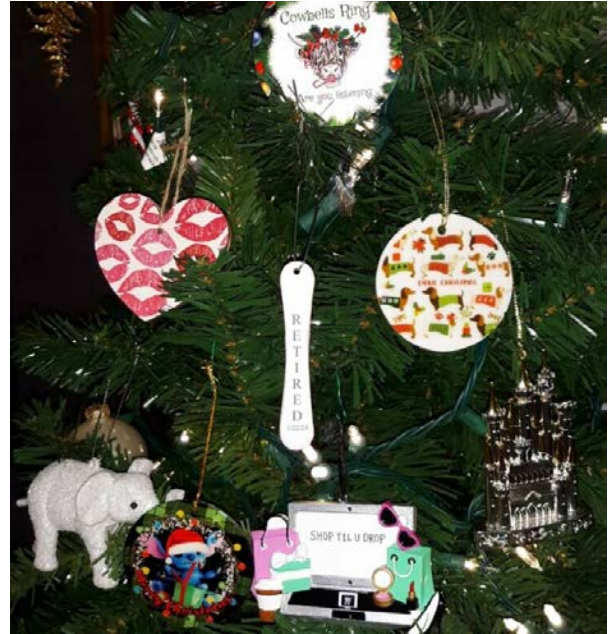
Hunt participants, mentors, parents and staff before the Friday afternoon hunt Dec. 2.

# Caught ON Camera

Christmas Photos



Pictured above and below is Lexington/Richland Sector Forestry Technician I David Taylor and his children with his unit decorated for the Pelion Lights parade Dec. 10.



Coastal Dispatchers decorated their Christmas tree with ornaments that represented themselves this year. From the top, Brittany Folk - cows, Loretta Reid - lips, Bernie Bazzle - retired craft stick, Christina Raby - weiner dogs, Chelsea Brownlee - elephants, Kelly Banks - Stitch, Sherry Thompson - Shop Til You Drop and Tiffany Sullivan - Disney castle.



SPB Program Coordinator Tyler Greiner was surprised by his mother and wife with a framed photo of his 17-month-old son Arthur sporting Smokey Bear apparel and a Smokey Bear Little Golden Book.



State Forester Scott Phillips, Retired Deputy State Forester Joel Felder and Retired State Forester Jack Gould catch up at the headquarters Christmas luncheon Dec. 16.



Coastal Dispatch's Christmas tree.

# Programs

## St. Matthews Elementary Students Learn About Our Forests

Fourth-grade students at St. Matthews Elementary School learned about tree growth, tree physiology and became trees in a forest competing for survival at an education program December 8. Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel and Calhoun Soil & Water Conservation District Manager Mary Dixon partnered in this outreach effort to teach students about our forests.

Mary led the first learning station and used tree cookies (cut cross-sections of tree stumps) to teach about the connection between a tree's annual growth rings and environmental conditions that affect a tree's growth. Using a paper plate and marker, students created tree cookies the same age as themselves. Students identified when important events in their lives took place, such as when they were born, when they started school, and so on.

Matt led the second learning station where students learned how limiting factors can affect a forest by becoming part of a forest in a hands-on (and body-on) game. Students learned how trees are affected by competition for resources and by natural or human-caused events. They collected, organized and analyzed their data to draw conclusions on how to best manage a forest for optimal health and production.



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel answers questions from the students at St. Matthews Elementary.



Matt demonstrates how factors affect a forest with a game for the students.

### Education

—Matt Schnabel



Calhoun Soil & Water Conservation District Manager Mary Dixon shows the students how to age trees with tree cookies.

## EVER WONDER?

1. Why does mineral water that 'has trickled through mountains for centuries' have a 'use by' date?
2. Why do toasters always have a setting that burns the toast to a horrible crisp no one would eat?
3. What is a picture of a thousand words worth?

# Programs

## Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) near Richburg held an open house for WUI and prevention partners from GA, NC and SC Jan. 12. Piedmont Firewise and Prevention Coordinator Chris Revels, Piedmont Assistant Regional Forester Brad Bramlett and Coastal Firewise and Prevention Coordinator Andy Johnson attended the event. The IBHS campus comprises around 90 acres of research stations and facilities.

IBHS does independent studies on construction materials ranging from shingles to mulch used to build homes or used around homes. Topics discussed at this event included home spacing, deck construction, green roofs/ Solar PV (Photovoltaic - which is the conversation of light to electricity) and expanding vents.

On Jan. 12, no homes were being “burned,” but attendees got to see the building in which actual homes are constructed and setup for actual ignitions. This building hosts human-sized fans that can generate hurricane force winds and a deluge system that can simulate heavy rains. The “home” is placed on a turn table that’s built into the floor so it can be rotated to any direction the test calls for.

IBHS only studies materials that can be purchased off the shelf at your local home center. One of the items discussed were Intumescent Vents. These vents can be found in two types. The first type is painted with a coating that swells, causing the openings to be closed and not allow the entry of embers or fire. The second type has specially engineered metal mesh that will swell causing the same effect.

Hail is a heavily studied topic at IBHS. Researchers will pre-stage in areas that are forecasted with storms. They wait on the hail to start and collect it, then measure its size, weight, and density in an effort to make materials more resilient to hail damage.

You can find more information about IBHS at <https://ibhs.org>.



Attendees listen to an orientation on IBHS.

### Prevention

— Andy Johnson



Piedmont Firewise and Prevention Coordinator Chris Revels holds a 3D-printed piece of the largest recorded hailstone.



An IBHS employee shows the size of the fan system.



The outside of the test warehouse with the intake side of the fan system.



The turntable can have a home placed on it and rotated to any direction for tests.

# Programs

## Start Planning for Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

It's not too early to start working with communities in planning a Community Wildfire Preparedness Day Community Event. Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is a national campaign that encourages people and organizations everywhere to come together on a single day to take action to raise awareness and reduce wildfire risks. In the US and Canada Community Wildfire Preparedness Day is always held on the first Saturday in May.

The WUI Team encourages FMOs, Project Foresters and other employees to spread the word in their respective areas encouraging people to come together to take action to reduce wildfire risks.

### Plan your project

This year Preparedness Day is focused on what residents can do on and around their home to help

protect against the threat of wildfires. The Prep Day toolkit provides a list of project ideas, safety tips, and more, to help guide you towards event day.

### Wildfire Community Preparedness Day



#### [Download the toolkit](#)

Please don't hesitate to reach out for planning and implementation assistance from the WUI Team. While we can't make each and every event, we can help provide you with planning assistance for a successful event.



### Prevention

— Chris Revels

## TIPS of the TRADE

If you have tips for any of our forestry jobs that might help new employees or enlighten others, please send them to [mjohnson@scfc.gov](mailto:mjohnson@scfc.gov).

### Tips from Pee Dee Regional Forester Mike Ney:

1. Use a three- or four-foot piece of house wiring (12/3 or 14/2) the next time you need a tie-down strap in the back of your truck. The scrap piece of wire can be wrapped around hand tools, handles on toolboxes or anywhere you can loop it around a few times. It's cheap, flexible and the plastic insulation prevents it from scratching.
2. Use a sharpie to write the open date on food in the refrigerator. It will take the mystery out of "when was this opened" the next time you're at the hunting camp or river cabin.

# Caught Camera



Santee Unit Forester Anneta Pritchard sent in this photo from a 35-acre prescribed burn she helped conduct Jan. 21 in Orangeburg County near Woodford. Anneta used the spot fire technique.



Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright sent in this photo of field edges planted in pines in Lee County.



Training & Safety Manager Stephen Patterson took this photo Jan. 24 of the sunrise on Santee while at Camp Bob Cooper for Basic Fire School.



Forest Management Administrative Assistant Debbie Kiser sent in this photo of Hatch, Utah where she had family members camping.



Pee Dee Assistant Regional Forester James Brunson took this photo of Chesterfield/Lancaster Sector FMO Glen Lampley (left) and Forestry Technician I Johnny Wilkins on a 30-acre prescribed burn in Chesterfield County Jan. 20.

# Programs

## Programs

### Statewide Green Infrastructure Plans Update

Over 35 attendees from 16 state agencies and other statewide groups spent December 1 reviewing the background, maps and feedback from the regional council of governments on the SC Statewide Green Infrastructure Plan. With funding from the USDA Forest Service through the SC Forestry Commission, the Green Infrastructure Center has been collaborating with local and regional entities over the past year across the 10 council of governments (COGs) on the statewide green infrastructure plan.

Maps and strategies were produced on regional and statewide levels to encourage a connected landscape. Connected forests are healthier, more resilient and more biodiverse. Habitat cores are intact habitats not overly bisected by roads or other breaks. They support species that require undisturbed habitats to survive and thrive. Corridors provide connections between core habitats that allow various species to move from different cores. Species decline may occur if cores are lost or spaced too far apart for species to “hop across” from core to core with an absence of a corridor. Corridors were placed with large, dotted arrows across the state. Regional councils of governments can use them as guides in future regional transportation plans, conservation easements, future parks, regional tourism and/or water quality protection projects, to name a few.

Various topics from identifying potential wildlife crossings, conservation targets, regional collaboration opportunities, riparian buffer restoration areas, solar development, and maintaining connectivity in developing landscapes were discussed. Attendees were able to view the different maps to offer feedback and input for the final production in January. Statewide maps of risks (development, sea level rise, impaired watersheds and solar development) were also hung for all to view. Ten maps, representative of each COG, were displayed with the corridors based on habitat core ranks.

Soon after the project concludes, ESRI will create online tools for map viewing and analysis that will be shared with COGS, counties, cities and other statewide groups involved with this project.



Forest Health Coordinator David Jenkins (right) participated in the group discussion of the maps.

#### Urban Forestry

—Cara Specht



Attendees discuss the statewide green infrastructure plan.



Urban Program Coordinator Frances Waite gives her input on one of the developed maps.

# Programs

## North Myrtle Beach Arbor Day Program

The City of North Myrtle Beach celebrated Arbor Day Dec. 2 by planting a zelkova tree, which is a hardy tree that tolerates urban conditions. The tree was planted by the city council, the city's tree board and the garden club. The city staff, led by certified arborist Jim Grainger, is very good at managing their urban forest and has been a Tree City USA for 17 years. The tree board were proudly wearing their new tree board shirts. Pee Dee Urban Forester Lois Edwards spoke at the ceremony.



Members of North Myrtle Beach's city council, tree board and garden club planted a tree for Arbor Day. Pee Dee Urban Forester Lois Edwards, front row to the right of the banner, spoke at the ceremony.

### Urban Forestry

—Lois Edwards

## Black River Arbor Day Celebrations

The Forestry Commission partnered with the Williamsburg County Soil and Water Board to give out 260 trees to all of the fifth grade students in Williamsburg County to celebrate Arbor Day. Georgetown/Williamsburg Project Forester GraceAnna Cooper, with the assistance of other unit employees, visited Hemingway Elementary, Williamsburg Academy, Kenneth Gardner Elementary and C.E. Murray Elementary during the week leading up to Arbor Day.



Georgetown Sector Forestry Technician I Brendon Williams (far left) and Georgetown/Williamsburg Project Forester GraceAnna Cooper (far right) with students from Hemingway Elementary.



GraceAnna speaks to the students at Kenneth Gardner Elementary while Horry/Marion Project Forester Caleb Watson and Williamsburg Sector Forestry Technician I Jackie Welch look on.



Welch throws up nutrients (candy) for trees as part of a PLT exercise for trees (students) at C.E. Murray.

### Black River

—GraceAnna Cooper



Cooper and Williamsburg Sector Forestry Technician I Brantley Burrows (not pictured) did an Arbor Day program for Williamsburg Academy.

# Caught ON Camera



Former Berkeley Supervisor Gray Valentine sent in this photo of a magnolia tree growing in the fork of an oak tree at his mother's house.



Piedmont Forestry Center Manager Chris McCorkle found this American strawberry bush (also known as "Hearts A Bursting") fruiting in November.



Conservation Education Coordinators from the Southern Group of State Foresters met up at the Piedmont Forestry Center for a recent retreat Jan. 4-6 to create conservation education resources and lessons that can be used by forestry personnel when leading youth and public programs. Pictured left to right at the Whitewater Falls Overlook are Oklahoma Division of Forestry Services Education Coordinator Tony Pascall, Texas A&M's Education Coordinator Jacey Tosh, Virginia Department of Forestry's Education Coordinator Ellen Powell, SCFC Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator Beth Foley and SCFC Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel.



Coastal Region Administrative Specialist Mikayla Folk and Coastal Dispatcher Brittany Folk, sisters, enjoy the Santee River scenery after a day of Wood Magic at Sewee.



Harbison State Forest Recreation Specialist Brad Phillips found this lost beaver Jan. 23 roaming behind the parking lot at the headquarters. Brad said the beaver was applying for a forester position and had a lifetime of experience and can even identify trees by taste.



Environmental Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel found the Southern Magnolia SC Champion Tree at Hampton Plantation when visiting in November.



Going through the Army's basic combat training as an 18-year-old is hard enough. Completing it as a 30-year-old while working your dream job can make it even more difficult.

However, Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Project Forester Henry Hutto didn't flinch at the challenge. Hutto graduated from Fort Jackson in Columbia Dec. 1 after completing 10 weeks of basic training with Delta Company - 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment. Completing the training is something he will cherish for the rest of his life.

"It was a heck of an experience, and I'm glad I did it," Hutto said. "I met a lot of great people from all over the country."

Many of those people were more than a decade younger than Hutto, and observing their reactions to certain situations early in training was difficult. However, he remembered how he responded to different things when he was 18 and was glad to offer them advice whenever they needed it.

"I had to get used to being called uncle or pops," he quipped. "They would always come to me and the older guys and ask, 'what would you do in this situation?' It was fun giving them advice. One of my friends from Hawaii came up to me and said, 'Hutto,

you have inspired me to become an officer.' That was my MOS (Military Occupational Specialty). It was awesome."

A typical day for Hutto began at 5 a.m. with physical training. After breakfast he'd change and take the approximately 2-mile walk to the range for a long period of weapons training. The day ended with some bay maintenance and cleaning up where he lived before going to bed and doing it all over again the next day.

While most of basic training was a completely different experience from what he's used to doing with the Forestry Commission, some of the exercises made it feel like he was back working in the forest.

"My favorite day was the land navigation. I didn't think I was going to like it, but I loved it," Hutto said. "I felt like I was back at work. They gave you a map, a compass and five points to go find. They'd give us four hours to do it. We got that done in about an hour and a half. It was fun sitting there waiting on everybody else to get done. Our platoon ended up winning that competition."

One of the most challenging parts of the experience for Hutto was being away from his family, but their support helped get him to the finish line.

"I couldn't have done it without my family, my wife in particular," he said. "They are huge supporters of me. It hit differently this Christmas after just being away from them. I just really soaked it all in."

Hutto is currently going through officer candidate school at the Palmetto Military Academy at McCrady Training Center in Eastover. Once he completes the 18-month program, he will graduate as a second lieutenant.

"It's not really a sprint. It's a marathon," he said. "We're going to get through it. The Army has a great leadership program over at McCrady."



Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Project Forester Henry Hutto doing a prescribed burn in Edgefield County.

(continued)

## Spotlight (continued)

I want to bring what I learn in the Army back to the Commission.”

While enlisting in the military has been something he’s thought about for a while, Hutto’s career with the Forestry Commission led him to go through basic training. Each year the Forestry Commission conducts aerial firefighting exercises with the South Carolina National Guard, and Hutto participated in trainings at Sand Hills State Forest in Patrick and the Piedmont Forestry Center in Tamassee.

“I really enjoy the trainings we do with the National Guard with the Bambi buckets and all. Those trainings made me realize this is what I want to pursue,” he said. “Having that connection with the National Guard through the Commission is something special.”

Working for the Forestry Commission has always been a dream of Hutto’s. When he attended Gilbert Elementary School, a Forestry Commission fire management officer and forestry technician participated in the school’s Farm Day.

“The FMO had his truck and his four-wheeler. One of the techs came with a dozer and all,” Hutto recalled. “I was like, ‘Man, that is cool.’ I was all about getting a four-wheeler at that time. I knew then that’s what I wanted to do.”

Hutto took his first forestry class at Gilbert High School under one of his favorite agriculture teachers, Derrick Cooper, and never looked back. He graduated from Clemson in 2015 with a degree in forest resource management.

After graduation Hutto began his career with the agency as a forestry technician at Harbison State Forest. In 2016 he accepted the project forester position for the Darlington/Lee/ Marlboro sector before moving to his current position in the Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda sector about six months later.

“I love it because there’s something new every day,” he explained. “New scenery. New tracts. New people. The people you get to meet, the relationships you build, and the people I work with make it all good.”

Hutto and his wife, Allyson, reside in Batesburg-Leesville. They enjoy trying different local restaurants and shopping at local markets. In his spare time, Hutto loves shooting at a range on his grandmother’s property, working out to stay in shape and going rucking.



State Forester Scott Phillips with Hutto looking at an FRP tract in Saluda County.



(left to right) Piedmont West Unit Forester Michael Weeks, Piedmont West Assistant Unit Forester Trey Cox and Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Sector FMO Colton Webb, far right, celebrate with Hutto on graduation day.



Henry’s family supported him through his training and celebrated his graduation.



Edgefield/McCormick/Saluda Project Forester Henry Hutto, with wife Allyson, graduated at Fort Jackson Dec. 1.

# White Snakeroot, the Plant that Killed Abraham Lincoln's Mother

By Dennis Chastain

In the early 1800s, a devastating disease of unknown origin was sweeping across much of North America. It was almost always lethal, particularly in isolated mountain communities.

It was not until 1828 that a frontier physician in Indiana learned from a Shawnee woman that the disease was the result of drinking milk from cows that had eaten a native plant: white snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*). Unfortunately, few learned of Dr. Anna Bixby's revelation.

In 1818, Abraham Lincoln's mother succumbed to the disease at the age of 34. Several other family members died as well. Somehow, 9-year-old Abe and his father were unaffected. Abraham Lincoln would, of course, go on to become a transformative president of the United States. Consumption of milk from the wrong cow by young Abe Lincoln could have profoundly changed the course of human events in this country.

The devastating disease, which came to be known as "milk sickness" or simply "milk sick," continued to kill thousands. Sometimes, half the population of small remote communities succumbed to the enigmatic illness. Ironically, Abraham Lincoln's father had just moved his family to rural Illinois in order to escape a persistent outbreak of milk sick in the Indiana community where they had previously lived.

We now know that the toxic compound in white snake root is

tremetol, which produces symptoms similar to diabetic keto-acidosis. If you had the misfortune to drink the milk, or eat the butter or cheese, or the meat of a cow that had feasted on the plant, the tremors or "the shakes" soon appeared; the dreaded sign that your days were numbered.

Other symptoms included: profound muscle weakness, lethargy, delirium, violent vomiting, severe constipation and conspicuously foul breath. Victims typically slipped into a coma shortly before dying.

For the most part, backwoods doctors had little to offer in the way of treatments, often relying on medieval remedies. Repeated blood-lettings, purgatives and calomel (a toxic mercury compound) did little more than hasten the patient's death, which typically ensued five to 10 days after the first symptoms appeared.

Over time, some people noticed that the disease seemed to spike in spring and fall, particularly in dry years. Most cattle were free-ranging at the time. When pastures dried up, the cows resorted to foraging in the woods where white snakeroot was (and still is) quite common and locally abundant.

Despite Dr. Bixby's revelation, it was more than a hundred years before the full clinical picture of milk sick emerged.

At least one man in Pickens County died of milk sick as late as 1945, but for the most part, by the early 20th century, farmers had begun fencing in their cattle and better treatments were



White snakeroot

available, and milk sick was little more than a distant memory.

These days, we have become accustomed to expect that when some mysterious disease comes along, an army of scientists all across the globe will go to work identifying the cause and treatment in double-quick time. And fortunately for us, that is exactly what happened during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, but clearly that has not always been the case. The "good ole days" were not always so good.

Dennis Chastain is a Pickens County naturalist, historian and former tour guide. He has been writing feature articles for South Carolina Wildlife magazine and other outdoor publications since 1989.

<https://greenvillejournal.com/news/field-notes-white-snakeroot-the-plant-that-killed-abraham-lincolns-mother/>

## Riddle Me This

1. How can the number four be half of five?
2. I have keys, but no locks and space, but no rooms. You can enter, but you can't go outside. What am I?
3. A is the brother of B. B is the brother of C. C is the father of D. So how is D related to A?

Answers: 1. IV, the Roman numeral for four, which is "half" (two letters) of the word five. 2. A keyboard 3. A is D's uncle.

# Coastal Employees Collect Donations for Veterans Victory House

During November and December the Coastal Dispatch Center and the Coastal Regional Office took up donations for the residents of the Veterans Victory House nursing facility in Walterboro. Snacks, socks, toiletries and other necessities were collected.

Dispatcher Alan Fitzsimmons delivered the items collected Dec. 17 to the staff at the Veterans Victory House, who were very appreciative. Due to COVID restrictions Alan couldn't interact with any of the residents, but they were informed that their friends at the Forestry Commission were thinking of them during the holiday season.

Good job, Coastal employees!



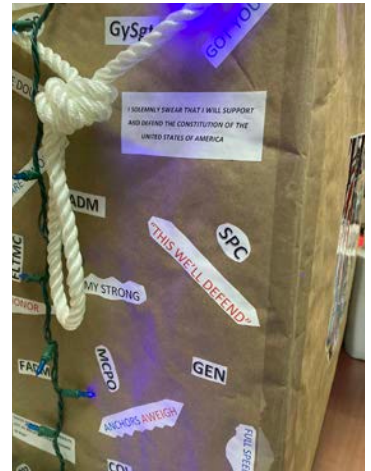
Snacks, socks, toiletries and other necessities were collected for the residents.



A collection box was set up in the dispatch center for employees to drop off their donations.



The bags and boxes of items were decorated with patriotic words of thanks.



# Tree of Tule in Mexico Has Largest Trunk Diameter in World



The Santa Maria del Tule Tree is recognized as one of the most noteworthy trees in the State of Oaxaca. It is famous within Mexico and beyond for the exceptional diameter of the trunk, which measures 47 ft. and has a circumference of 147 ft.

Botanists have classified this tree as *Taxodium Mucronatum*, thought to be over 2,000 years old and reaching a height of more than 131 feet.

It is estimated that this natural wonder has a volume of 922 cubic yards and an approximate weight of 509 tons, and can thus be considered as one of the biggest and oldest trees in the world.

# The Happiest, Least Stressful, Most Meaningful Jobs in America

Envy the lumberjacks, for they perform the happiest, most meaningful work on earth. Or at least they think they do. Farmers, too.

Agriculture, logging and forestry have the highest levels of self-reported happiness — and lowest levels of self-reported stress — of any major industry category, according to our analysis of thousands of time journals from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey. (Additional reporting sharpened our focus on lumberjacks and foresters, but almost everyone who works on farms or in forests stands out.)

The time-use survey typically asks people to record what they were doing at any given time during the day. But in four recent surveys, between 2010 and 2021, they also asked a subset of those people how meaningful those activities were, or how happy, sad, stressed, pained and tired they felt on a six-point scale. As you might guess, activities like playing with your grandkids tend to be loaded with happiness and meaning, while waiting on hold or commuting produce little of either.

But the two aren't always correlated. Health-care and social workers rate themselves as doing the most meaningful work of anybody (apart from the laudable lumberjacks), but they rank lower on the happiness scale. They also rank high on stress.

The most stressful sectors are the industry including finance and

insurance, followed by education and the broad grouping of professional and technical industries, a sector that includes the single most stressful occupation: lawyers. Together, they paint a simple picture: A white collar appears to come with significantly more stress than a blue one.

While our friends the lumberjacks and farmers do the least-stressful work, their jobs are well-known to be particularly perilous, and they report the highest levels of pain on the job. To puzzle out why, we zoomed out to look at activity categories beyond work.

The most meaningful and happiness-inducing activities were religious and spiritual, which doesn't tell us much about farming or forestry — at least not as it's commonly practiced in the United States. But the second-happiest activity — sports, exercise and recreation — helps crack the case.

Like farming, recreation ranks high on both happiness and pain. And the two activities have one obvious thing in common: They take place outside. Preferably in nature. The slight pain is a sign of demanding physical exertion, and the price of getting outdoors.

With that in mind, we ran the numbers again, this time for the location of each activity. We found that while your workplace looms as the single most stressful place in the universe, the great outdoors ranks in the top three for both happiness and



Piedmont Assistant Regional Forester Brad Bramlett enjoys being in the woods measuring trees.

meaning — only your place of worship consistently rates higher.

Researchers across the social and medical sciences have found a strong link between mental health and green space or being outdoors. Even seeing a tree out your window can help you recover from illness faster. So imagine the boost you get from being right next to said tree — even if, like our friend the lumberjack, you're in the process of chopping it down.

But foresters' happiness comes from more than just the great outdoors. Forestry forces you to work on a slower time scale. It pushes you to have a generational outlook. As a forester you know your work is sustainable. As your trees grow, they're sucking carbon out of the air while providing a habitat for wildlife and a linchpin for regional ecosystems. When they're harvested, their carbon will either be stored for the long term as a joist in a house, or as paper packaging that will replace the fossil-fuel-heavy plastics littering American landfills.

To view the full article and charted results, visit: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/01/06/happiest-jobs-on-earth/>



Fairfield/Newberry/Union Project Forester Chase Folk meets with a landowner about managing his property in Newberry County.

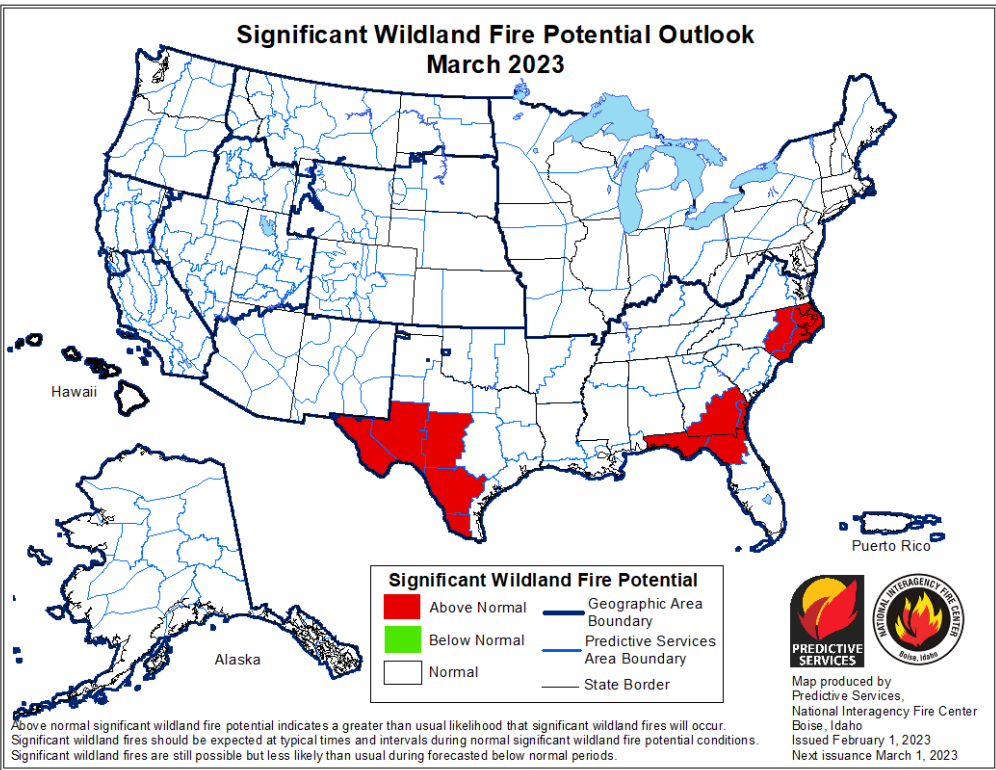
# Fire Weather Outlook

**Southern Area:** Ongoing impacts from the multi-year La Niña continue for the Southern Area, with longterm drought in place across large parts of Oklahoma and Texas, in addition to eastern North Carolina. Even as La Niña begins to fade heading into spring, the typical lag seen in the atmosphere, combined with depleted soil moisture in several areas could allow for an active spring fire season for some portions of the Southern Area.

After a brief return to wintry conditions in early February, model guidance is indicating the return of a more classic La Niña pattern the rest of the month, which has strong support from past analogs. This should result in an anomalous high pressure ridge building over the eastern states throughout most of the month, promoting widespread and potentially record-breaking warmth across the Southeast.

For the Southeast, drought has migrated farther east the past several months, with severe drought now encompassing northern Florida, where streamflow data shows water levels are largely below normal for this time of year. Rainfall amounts in recent weeks have quickly tapered off from the panhandle into northern Florida and southeast Georgia, resulting in the maintenance of above normal large fire potential there in February. Recent wetting rain in the Carolinas and a continued wet pattern into early February have prompted a downgrade to normal significant fire potential there in February, but rainfall observations and forecasts are not supportive of significant drought improvement. The March forecast calls for above normal significant fire potential for the two eastern North Carolina PSAs, with a return to normal in April and May given increasing uncertainty in how quickly La Niña weakens.

There are few indications that a consistently wetter than normal pattern will develop across northern Florida and southern Georgia anytime soon, and with below to well below normal water levels observed in local swamps and waterways, it seems prudent to maintain above normal significant fire potential there through the forecast period.



## Current Fire Numbers for South Carolina

### MONTH AND YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS 5 AND 10-YEAR AVERAGE

Time Period	DECEMBER		JULY-DECEMBER		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	58	237	376	1,826	1,368	9,018
10 Year Average	60	223	416	2,829	1,466	10,089
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	24	106	363	1,648	363	1,648

Time Period	JANUARY		JULY-JANUARY		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	87	357	463	2,184	1,368	9,018
10 Year Average	121	570	537	3,399	1,466	10,090
Current FY <sup>1</sup>	91	328	454	1,976	454	1,976

# Amazing Trees

## *Hiding Lion*



This amazing tree is from the NatureVibe FaceBook page. NatureVibe is created with the purpose of influencing the general public to love nature, protect its natural beauty, its value, its funniest moments and the historical aspects hidden behind its beauty.

<https://www.facebook.com/NatureVibes.me/posts/the-spirit-of-trees-/125679679040473/>

## Quote of the Month

*“A mistake which makes you humble is much better than an achievement that makes you arrogant.”*

*Anonymous*

## Photo of the Month



Fall colors at the C.E. Berry, Jr. Forestry Center decorate the landscape.

Please send in your photos or news to Michelle Johnson at [mjohnson@scfc.gov](mailto:mjohnson@scfc.gov).